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Training: Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations

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What I would like to inform you today focus on the role of Wisma Putra, or also known as the Foreign Ministry of Malaysia to wardnation building. I am privileged and honoured to be invited by Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) to make this presentation. I happened to be an Adjunct Professor at UUM, but unfortunately every time we discuss about the possibility of me going to Sintok, that never materialised except ones. Perhaps next year I have more time, as my contract expires in February next year. I will have more time to go up to UUM to engage in my activities. Well, thank you very much for inviting me.

This is supposed to be a presentation on a case study that focuses on the role of the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in the field of diplomatic training and international studies.

Wisma Putra

Malaysia is a relatively young country. When we started after independence we had no foreign service to speak of. They took senior civil servants from the Malayan Civil Service upon independence to man the new ministry which was at the clock tower near the *padang* (field) here. And then it was transferred to the ministry proper (office) in *jalan* (road) Wisma Putra which was the site of the first house accorded to the first Prime Minister of Malaya, YTM Tunku Abdul Rahman. The Ministry was dubbed as Wisma Putra, *Rumah Putra* or House of Prince. Tunku was a prince from the state of Kedah. Subsequently the ministry was transferred to Putrajaya along with other ministries.

Diplomatic and International Relationship Training

In response to the need for diplomatic officers to service mission abroad or embassies abroad, we started opening up embassies in various places

including the United Nation (UN). Then training was done at INTAN which is the National Institute of Public Administration. They have a centre called Centre for International Relationship Diplomacy and I was privileged to be the director of the centre for a couple of years in the early 1980's and subsequently a standalone Institute of Foreign Affairs, or Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs we established in the same place at *Jalan Lubuk Intan* (Lubuk Intan Road) Petaling Jaya. It was then transferred to the site of the old foreign ministry which was then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in which it is located now. It is now called the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations or in short IDFR.

Visions

The centre has the following visions; to develop a core of diplomatic officers who would be able to assertively and effectively promote and defend the country national interest in keeping with the ever increasing pace and breathe of modern day diplomacy resulting from global changes. Secondly, to keep officers with in-depth knowledge, professional skills, and professionalism in the conduct of diplomacy. These are the major visions of the IDFR.

Training activities

As a training institute, it has set itself the vision of becoming the regional focal point and centre of excellence for diplomatic training and research. In pursuing this vision, IDFR organizes a wide range of training activities which can broadly be categories as follows: It conducts diplomatic training programs form division foreign affair officers and officers from other government departments especially from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Ministry of Defence. Malaysia has a lot of defence attaché abroad. In addition, the police also have attaché abroad. Ministry of education, MARTRADE which is the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, the Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (MIDA), the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB), Tourism Malaysia and various other agencies and government that deal or have interaction with agencies, countries and companies abroad were also involved in various diplomacy training.

IDFR organizes diplomacy training courses for developing countries under Malaysian Technical Corporation Program, also known as the MTCP. You might have heard about it. It is a program funded by the Malaysian government to impart knowledge, skills and experience to our colleagues from developing countries. The MTCP has been around for quite some time and training is not only given by INTAN, but also by other colleges and institutes such as the Ministry of Education, universities and others.

Now question might be asked why Malaysia is spending valuable money, resources on the training of foreign officials. These days with scarce resources, why do you spend money to train foreigners, foreign officials, whose responsibility would be their own government.

The MTCP program I think was prompted by the requests by various countries. Various heads of governments when they meet our leaders especially during Tun Mahathir's (Malaysia's Former Prime Minister 1981-2003) time requested assistance. MTCP started even earlier on sharing with other countries from the developing world our experiences, knowledge, skills that we have acquired over the years as a developing country. Under Tun Mahathir he promulgated a policy called the 'prosper thy neighbour'. This is a policy that works on the premise that what we have acquired, what we have benefited is a result essentially what we acquired from other countries i.e. from the commonwealth the UN (United Nations) and other institutions. We should try to impart, and share with different countries. Tun Mahathir used to say that it's better to have especially in your neighbourhood countries that are prosperous than countries that are under developed. Just like in a neighbourhood, one is able to sleep well at night when the neighbours are well taken care, and vice versa the situation differs if the neighbourhood is suffering from poverty.

So under that policy of 'prosper thy neighbour' not 'beggar thy neighbour' we mounted a lot of programs for third world countries. From our assessment this training has gone on very well, has been well received by many countries and this is where the Institute of Diplomacy has played its role. We conduct on average six to seven courses a year for diplomats from foreign countries. They're well received and many of them speak well of the institute and they contributed to the interaction, developing comradeship between and among diplomats.

We also conduct annually the forum for young Asian diplomats funded by third countries which are now funded by South Korea through the Asian secretariat in Jakarta. We also have a 13 months post graduate Master of Social Science course in Diplomacy Strategies in collaboration with Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). In addition, we also organize workshops, roundtables public lectures, and others just like other training institutions.

My Assessment of Our Contribution

Next, I like to talk about my assessment of our contribution as a training institute and some thoughts as to where we should go from here. Now, there has been no formal or systematic study made on the impact of the role of IDFR in terms of training either on our diplomats, or diplomats from abroad. We have made indirect studies based on assessment that students do at the end of each course. For instance diplomats from Germany evaluated us very well. In many instances from the professor to

the training content, and on a scale from one to seven, they sometimes gave us the maximum score. The same goes for other training components like the performance of the institute in terms of managing and running the courses, we did pretty well.

Our experts and distinguished fellows

Within the institute, we do not have experts. We *farm out*, we establish so called strategic linkages with universities and we invite professors, lectures to provide input to our courses. As an incentive of course they get the usual allowance-payment as per-rate provided by the government for PhD so on and so forth, for non PhD a bit less. Also as a further incentive we appointed some fifteen individuals both local and foreign as our distinguished fellows. The numbers are increasing. We hope to identify a few more experts in our areas in diplomacy and international relations to be added to our list of distinguished fellows.

MOU's

In terms of evaluations, we are well evaluated and our image has been rather positive abroad and also internally. This is evident by the number of request that we received from time to time to establish Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with IDFR. Up-to-date, there have been various MOUs signed with different institutes, and I think there will be more to come in the future. We seek new collaborators.

We also have MOU's with international organizations, international institutes from other countries. Some have laps but others are still active and few countries like India, Pakistan, Kerdic Republic and Argentina are trying to explore with us to establish an MOU in terms of training and exchanges of personnel's.

For the first time we've been approached by a private university, a leading private university wanting to establish a linkage with IDFR. This is a rather new development to us. Being a government agency, we have to think out of the box. I don't know from your experience. Maybe you're more independent then the IDFR. We are under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an agency under the government and sometimes we think too much in the box.

But I would like to think, and take a leave from you if you would have this collaboration with this private institution. This university trains a lot of foreigners mostly from Africa and other parts of the world as well in various disciplines. One of the disciplines is diplomacy. The idea is mooted by them because they thought that if they could collaborate with IDFR, where students attend courses at IDFR, or alternatively we provide courses at the university, this would add value to the degree or qualification of this university.

But the problem is that as a government institute we cannot charge fees. Our courses are given for free to government servants, officials both at home and abroad. So we can't charge fees. We have to make arrangement where instead of asking for fees-monetary contributions from this university or other universities from the private sector, we ask them to contribute sponsorships. So, I would like to learn from you as to how Universiti Utara Malaysia or other institute does this.

Some Thoughts

The above encapsulate some of our activities and now some thoughts on how we have done, in terms of training diplomats. In the contemporary world which is characterized by rapid globalization and all that entails, the conduct of a country international relations or diplomacy faces various challenges. Part of this challenge is grooming a diplomat with the right education qualifications, professional skills and attributes so as to be able to promote and defend his or her country assertively and effectively.

Assertiveness

I emphasis assertively here for one reason, we diplomat from Asian particularly this part of Asia, including Malaysia in particular, we are not very assertive when promoting ourselves largely because of cultural factors: We are too shy, too inhibitant, too polite. Mahathir, our former prime minister was an exception. Most of our leaders are very polite at meetings, at function and all that. Maybe it is our culture "to be seen and not to be heard" is a restraining factor.

At IDRF, we want people to be pretty assertive, not rude but assertive; vocal, and articulate. Sometimes when you give a lecture, you would like to see an interactive process between the lecturer and the students. Nothing is more discomforting then having a lecture when students just listen, and at the end of the lecture you ask questions, and there are no questions or answer. I had my own share of this when I talked at various universities. This as I have said earlier is a cultural factor. So at IDFR we encourage people to speak up. Fortunately we have many foreign students at our universities, and quite often we count very much on foreign students to speak up. People coming from different cultures are found to have less inhibition about speaking up.

I must tell you my experience at UN when I was there, big delegation from Malaysia came to attend a high level of the Economic and Social Counsel (ECOSOC) meeting headed by a well known lady, director general of departments. I was busy with the supreme counsel and I was told by one of my colleagues, "Mr Ambassador, what has happened to Malaysia? You have a big delegation but your delegation did not speak up. Have you

changed your position?" That was soon after Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi assumed the premiership. Of course he has a different style than Mahathir Mohammad, low profile typical Malay Malaysian kind of demure but that is his personality. There's no reason for our diplomat not to speak up but people thought under Tun Abdullah Badawi, Malaysia has changed its position. I had a tough time explaining "No! No! We don't have a change of position". I think this issue was on some women issue, empowering women so on and so forth. "No we have not changed our position in terms of development and poverty eradication as well". So I told my colleagues who attended that meeting to make sure that our delegation speaks. Unfortunately, that too did not happen. I've already cleared the text, but she said when she showed it to the leader, the leader said it was not significant. These are points that some of the other countries can pick up. And sure enough in the course of that meeting other countries spoke up and got noticed. Malaysia was noticed for its silence. And that was terrible. So I asked the officer that was doing this, another lady "what happened? Did we speak up?" and she said "No!" "I told you that you should speak up if the leader does not want to speak, please get her permission for you to speak up". She said she tried to but she was chilled by the leader "*Jangan Memandai!*" (Don't be too clever). So for that two days conference, Malaysia was silent and people thought that Malaysia has changed its position simply because Mahathir was no longer around as Prime Minister.

So that's why at IDFR we teach people to be assertive. Now the Aussie (Australians) has no problem. Why don't they have a problem? The West has no problem. Even in Asia, the Indian, the sub continent has no problem. I think this problem of shyness, being polite starts from maybe Myanmar eastwards rather than China, Japan perhaps. The Korea's are not that quite you know!

Be Strident

So as I said just now, we expect our people to be assertive in defence of their foreign policy. Just recently, we had our foreign minister coming back a second time, and you might know him. He is now a powerful minister with three ministries under his wing, Datuk Seri Dr. Rais Yatim who has a short stint as foreign minister in the early years for less than two years and came back and again for a short term also for two years and he wanted us Wisma Putra and the training school to ensure we Malaysia adopt a strident foreign policy. Strident! Some of us were not very comfortable with the word strident.

We thought the strident has some negative connotation. What he meant was to speak up or speak out like we used to do during Dr Mahathir's time. I'm sorry the terms might not be quite appropriate but he wanted us to be strident to be assertive. So now it's assertive, we've dropped strident but it is assertive.

Which Training Models?

There is no one way of training a diplomat, no one that can be seen as the most perfect way. There are many models. In some countries training is on the job as we did many years before we had this institute; on the job training. But the problem with on the job training, seniors must allocate some time to train their juniors, their subordinates. And many senior don't have the time. They are very busy especially in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially when the world is awake 24 hours. You may be sleeping but you have to ensure that decisions are given to the various embassies abroad.

In some other countries, they have full fledged universities training consulates, although the actual numbers may not be many. I know China has one called the China Foreign Affairs University. They established in 1955 and then became pertinent during the agriculture revolution and resuscitate recently. They have a full university; actually run jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and their Ministry of Education. It is a very fascinating experiment because I think it is about the only country to have a university under the arms of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education. Mainly their training encapsulate both academic as well as professional training which a model is that maybe we as Malaysian should look at.

At IDFR we are trying to explore with the idea of upgrading the institute to a full university, Ministry of Defence. The Ministry of Defence has a defence university, a national defence university so we were hoping that the new Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib who established the defence university would support us in the idea of a foreign affairs university, but it's yet to be seen.

So, the debate continues as to what kind of education best suited for our diplomats. In some countries they just send their diplomats to universities for post graduate courses. It's expensive, but they argue that only universities can impart deep in-depth and comprehensive knowledge on international issues. Training Institutes like IDFR would not have the time. In any case we don't have the expertise as I've told you earlier; a very small core of experts. Right now we don't have, a PhD holder. The one we had, Dr. Chandran from Universiti Malaya passed away a few days ago. I've no PhD.

Another model that we were looking at is the South Korea Model, Republic of Korea (ROK) institute of national affairs and national strategies under their Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They have some 17 PhD's. We don't have any. So what we do (is) to establish strategic linkages, we get people to come to lecture at IDFR.

So, there are various models, and we are still discussing as to what would be the model for us to proceed. Otherwise in terms of linkages with other international organizations we are doing it well. We follow closely and take active part in the international meetings on the Asian+3 process (Asian plus China, Korea and Japan) and under that umbrella we have meetings of the directors of diplomatic training institutes of these countries.

There is also the Vienna based meetings, or forum every year of diplomatic academies and institutes teaching international relations of various countries but these are run by the Vienna Diplomatic Academy on one hand, and also by Georgetown University. We keep in touch with these organizations to obtain, upgrade ourselves in terms teaching technology, methodology and knowledge on foreign affairs.

Conclusion

So, these in a nut shell are the kind of what we do at IDFR. We have all this while a major constraint that is manpower constraint and resources. We have about 90 strong men and women in terms of staffing but all of them are support staffs, We lack of expertise and resources at the management and teaching level. So this is where we are at this stage and we hope to establish linkages with other universities, other institutions in order to become better.

So, that I think in a nut shell is my presentation this morning and I will stop here. Thank you.